

Statutory Responsibilities of the California Child Welfare Council

California Welfare and Institutions Code Section 16540: The California Child Welfare Council is hereby established, which shall serve as an advisory body responsible for improving the collaboration and processes of the multiple agencies and the courts that serve the children and youth in the child welfare and foster care systems. The council shall monitor and report the extent to which child welfare and foster care programs and the courts are responsive to the needs of children in their joint care. The council shall issue advisory reports whenever it deems appropriate, but in any event, no less frequently than annually, to the Governor, the Legislature, the Judicial Council, and the public. A report of the Child Welfare Council shall, at a minimum, include recommendations for all of the following:

- (a) Ensuring that all state child welfare, foster care, and judicial funding and services for children, youth, and families is, to the greatest extent possible, coordinated to eliminate fragmentation and duplication of services provided to children or families who would benefit from integrated multiagency services.
- (b) Increasing the quality, appropriateness, and effectiveness of program services and judicial processes delivered to children, youth, and families who would benefit from integrated multiagency services to achieve better outcomes for these children, youth, and families.
- (c) Promoting consistent program and judicial excellence across counties to the greatest extent possible while recognizing the demographic, geographic, and financial differences among the counties.
- (d) Increasing collaboration and coordination between county agencies, state agencies, federal agencies, and the courts.
- (e) Ensuring that all state Title IV-E plans, program improvement plans, and court improvement plans demonstrate effective collaboration between public agencies and the courts.
- (f) Assisting the Secretary of California Health and Human Services and the chief justice in formulating policies for the effective administration of the child welfare and foster care programs and judicial processes.
- (g) Modifying program practices and court processes, rate structures, and other system changes needed to promote and support relative caregivers, family foster parents, therapeutic placements, and other placements for children who cannot remain in the family home.
- (h) Developing data- and information-sharing agreements and protocols for the exchange of aggregate data across program and court systems that are providing services to children and families in the child welfare system. These data-sharing agreements shall allow child welfare agencies and the courts to access data concerning the health, mental health, special education, and educational status and progress of children served by county child welfare systems subject to state and federal confidentiality laws and regulations. They shall be developed in tandem with the establishment of judicial case management systems as well as additional or enhanced performance measures described in Section 16544 (b).
- (i) Developing systematic methods for obtaining policy recommendations from foster youth about the effectiveness and quality of program services and judicial processes, and ensuring that the interests of foster youth are adequately addressed in all policy development.
- (j) Implementing legislative enactments in the child welfare and foster care programs and the courts, and reporting to the Legislature on the timeliness and consistency of the implementation.
- (k) Monitoring the adequacy of resources necessary for the implementation of existing programs and court processes, and the prioritization of program and judicial responsibilities.
- (l) Strengthening and increasing the independence and authority of the foster care ombudsperson.
- (m) Coordinating available services for former foster youth and improving outreach efforts to those youth and their families.